UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Delegates from 193 countries consider ways to eradicate poverty, as Summit for Social Development continues in Copenhagen.

+ Secretary-General expresses shock at assassination of United Nations staff member in Algiers; condemns latest violence in Algeria.

+ UNPROFOR is concerned at formation of combined military command by Bosnia and Croatia; says move adds to heightened tensions in both countries.

+ Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs says international effort to stop famine in Somalia was outstanding.

+ Iraq tells Committee on Charter "unprecedented" resort to sanctions under Chapter VII does not conform with United Nations objectives; says even medicine and food imports blocked.

+ Member States owe United Nations a total of $3 billion as of 28 February.

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The eradication of poverty was the theme under discussion Tuesday at the World Summit for Social Development, which is being attended by nearly 2,700 delegates from 193 countries. More than a billion people are estimated to live in absolute poverty, most of them from developing countries. Many delegates from those nations spoke of how poverty affected their people and what they were doing to alleviate the problem. Others cautioned that structural adjustment programmes coupled with the problem of debt servicing posed formidable development constraints.

Ethiopia's Minister of Planning and Development, Dr. Duri Mohammed, stressed that the challenge of ridding Africa of brute poverty must be met mainly by Africans themselves. He cited economic strife and poor economic

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policies as being partly responsible for poverty on the continent. However, the international community had a responsibility to create the external conditions which would encourage employment -- the main defence against poverty.

Yesterday, the Summit focused on ways to establish an enabling environment for social development, which supported economic growth and poverty eradication. Developed nations were urged to ease the foreign debt burden of developing countries and to reaffirm their commitment to contributing 0.7 per cent of their GNP to official development assistance. The Bretton Woods institutions were called upon to promote social development.

James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said there was little equity in today's world, where a widening gulf between rich and poor bred despair and instability. Strong countries must give weak ones access to their markets, share modern technology and provide financial support for development assistance and debt relief, he said.

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Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was shocked to learn of the murder of Ouassini Lahrache, an staff member of the United Nations Information Centre in Algiers, according to a UN spokesman. Mr. Lahrache was assassinated Tuesday, as he left home on his way to work. He was shot when he resisted an attempt by two men to hijack his car. A neighbour who was travelling with him was unharmed.

The Secretary-General strongly deplored Mr. Lahrache's killing and other gross acts of violence, which had already claimed so many innocent lives in Algeria. He extended his condolences to Mr. Lahrache's family and his colleagues at the UN office in Algiers.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Samir Sanbar, speaking from Copenhagen, also expressed his condolences to the family of Mr. Lahrache who had worked with the UN since 1983.

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The Governments of Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have formed a combined military command, encompassing the Croatian military and the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation, according UNPROFOR Radio. Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, said Monday that the bloc had not been created as a threat to any third party, as long as peace efforts were not exhausted.

The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) did not view the move as a positive development, according to its Director of Information. In the context of heightened tensions in both Croatia and Bosnia, the latest combined command, while between two internationally recognized States, was a reason for concern, he said.

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Meanwhile, senior United States envoy Richard Holbrooke met with President Tudjman Monday, to try and convince him to reverse the decision to terminate UNPROFOR's mandate in Croatia at the end of March, the spokesman said. In other developments, Foreign Ministers from the European Union have renewed their request for Croatia to reconsider its position and plan to use "economic encouragement". UNPROFOR Radio reports the Ministers have decided negotiations for an economic cooperation and trade accord with Croatia will not start unless the Tudjman Government agrees to extend the mandate.

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The international community's intervention in Somalia was mainly humanitarian, according to Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lansana Kouyate. He told United Nations correspondents Tuesday, that before the intervention Somalis were dying at a rate of 1,000 a day because of famine and violence between the clans. The international community's effort to end the large-scale killing and starvation had been outstanding.

Unfortunately, all efforts to create a Somali State had been in vain because the factions did not allow it, Mr. Kouyate continued. Although mistakes had been made, in the final analysis the most important consideration was the international community's commitment to help Somalia and the positive humanitarian results achieved. The world community had not abandoned Somalia. United Nations agencies had stayed in the country to help with reconstruction and rehabilitation, although their international staff had been temporarily relocated outside Mogadishu, he said. However, the United Nations could only be a facilitator. Its efficiency and effectiveness would depend on the Somalis who must help themselves.

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The rapid resort to Chapter VII sanctions imposed on Iraq was unprecedented in United Nations history, the country's representative, Saeed Hasan, said Monday. He was addressing the Special Committee on the United Nations Charter and on the Strengthening of the Organization. The imposition of the sanctions did not conform with UN objectives and had even blocked the import of educational materials, medicine and food. Two missions sent by the Secretary-General to evaluate the effect of sanctions on Iraq had documented the depth of human suffering, but no further action had been taken, he said. The Charter provided no mechanism to assess the impact of sanctions on people.

Several speakers addressed the need for mechanisms to ensure assistance for third States affected by Security Council sanctions. France and the United Kingdom noted that international financial institutions, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were addressing the problem.

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The United Nations was owed a total of $3 billion as of 28 February. Of that amount, $1.2 billion was for unpaid assessments to the regular budget and $1.8 billion was for peace-keeping assessments, according to a UN spokesman. At the end of January, the unpaid contributions totalled $3.6 billion. The United States was the top debtor, owing a total of $1 billion and the Russian Federation was the second largest debtor, owing $624 million.

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